

Hyer Woods Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2017-2026



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

2-29-16

Date

Hyer Woods Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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OZARK REGION

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FORESTRY DIVISION

Forest Management Chief

John Tuttle 2-25-16
Signature Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Hyer Woods Conservation Area, # 7608
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1976 - leased to the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) by The Nature Conservancy; 1998 - deeded to the Department
- **Acreage:** 30 acres
- **County:** Dent
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**
Manage sustainable plant communities. Provide educational and recreational opportunities for the public.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**
The desired future condition is a healthy forest that will encourage educational opportunities and recreational use.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**
N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

- I. Special Considerations**
 - A. Priority Areas:** Dry Fork Fisheries Priority Watershed
 - B. Natural Areas:** None
- II. Important Natural Features and Resources**
 - A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed. A plant inventory was conducted on the area in 1975. At that time no species of conservation concern were known from this area.
 - B. Caves:** None
 - C. Springs:** Yes, records kept with the Department Natural History Biologist.
 - D. Other:** A remnant Ozark hardwood climax forest with white oak predominating; small limestone bluffs, ranging from very dry to continually wet, support several micro plant communities.
- III. Existing Infrastructure**
 - 1 parking lot
 - 1 area sign, depicting the land donation
 - 1 grassy hiking trail to the southernmost spring

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:** None known.
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** None known.
- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** No known cultural resources.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None known at this time. In 2009 a survey was done for the southwest corner of the property.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

This area offers unique and interesting natural features, including large mature trees, small limestone bluffs, two springs and a creek.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage the forest community to sustain the climax forest.
- 2) Protect the springs and small limestone bluff communities.
- 3) Control invasive or exotic plant and animal species.

Management Objective 1: Manage the forest community to sustain the climax forest.

Strategy 1: Maintain the current annual inspections to check for insect and disease outbreaks and die back. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Periodically monitor the area for seedling recruitment and other forest community issues. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Protect the springs and small limestone bluff communities.

Strategy 1: Deter restricted uses of the area, especially around the springs and bluffs. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Determine the feasibility of constructing a wooded bridge over the rock wall of the developed spring to keep foot traffic off it. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: If the mowed hiking trail is expanded throughout the area, it will be developed in stable areas to protect the limestone bluff communities. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Control invasive or exotic plant and animal species.

Strategy 1: Monitor high priority exotic species (e.g., spotted knapweed, Japanese stilt grass and feral hogs). Eradicate and/or control these species, as is feasible. (Forestry, Wildlife)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Hyer Branch flows southwest to northeast through the property. It is a losing stream that is part of the recharge area for Meramec Spring in Phelps County. Hyer Branch flows into Dry Fork Creek, which is part of the upper Meramec River Drainage. The stream is considered a Fisheries Priority Watershed.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Protect the stream, riparian areas and areas around the two springs.

Management Objective 1: Minimize any in-stream disturbance or sediment inputs from area management or public use.

Strategy 1: Coordinate between divisions on any actions that require soil disturbance. Monitor stream banks and trails for active erosion that would deposit sediment into the stream. (Forestry, Fisheries, Design and Development)

Strategy 2: Facilitate a good working relationship with neighboring landowners to ensure reduced inputs from neighboring stream banks and riparian areas. (Forestry, Fisheries, Private Lands Services)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.
- 2) Facilitate good working relationships with neighboring landowners.

Management Objective 1: Improve educational and interpretive opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain current geocache Special Use Permits with local geocachers. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Determine the feasibility of constructing an overlook platform along the creek next to the spring at the end of the mowed hiking trail. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Extend the mowed hiking trail through the area to provide more access and improve visibility of the area's limestone bluffs and other natural features. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Facilitate a good working relationship with neighboring landowners.

Strategy 1: Work with neighbors to minimize any boundary, trespass or any other issues affecting Hyer Woods CA or private property. (Protection, Forestry)

Strategy 2: Promote habitat management on neighboring landowner properties (Private Land Services, Forestry).

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure.
- 2) Ensure Department boundaries are marked and visible to public users.
- 3) Acquisition of land.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure.

Strategy 1: Maintain the current gravel parking lot. (Design and Development, Forestry)

Strategy 2: Maintain the sign describing the land donation and its visibility from the county road. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Ensure Department boundaries are marked and visible to public users.

Strategy 1: Maintain painted boundary lines and replace signs as needed. (Forestry)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered. (Forestry)

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 2	X									
Strategy 3	X	X								
Public Use Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 2	X	X								
Strategy 3	X	X								
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1					X					X
Administrative Considerations										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 1			X			X			X	
Strategy 2		X		X		X		X		X
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1					X					X

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Hyer Woods was first donated to The Nature Conservancy by Mr. and Mrs. John Bowles as a memorial for Dr. John Hyer and other pioneer doctors of the Ozarks. The Nature Conservancy then leased it to the Department to manage in 1976. In 1998 The Nature Conservancy deeded the area to the Department. The area was classified as a natural area because it was/is a remnant of typical Ozark hardwood climax forest. Since the early classification, larger tracts of this same type have been found and classified as natural areas. Subsequently, in 2000, the area was declassified as a natural area. Since its declassification, management of the conservation area has focused on maintaining it in a pristine state.

The conservation area is primarily visited by its neighbors and has not been highly used. In 2011 Forestry reopened and graveled the old small parking lot and mowed the old trail to the bigger spring. A few months later, a local geocacher asked to place two geocaches on the area. Since then, more people have visited the area to look for the caches and enjoy a portion of the area.

The son-in-law of the land donator had hoped to have some type of rest area, picnic tables, etc. for people to stop and see/use the area. With the reopening of the parking lot and trail and the geocaches, more people are visiting and enjoying the area.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Upland Forest	20		67
Bottomland/Riparian Forest	10		33
Total	30		100
Stream Frontage		0.5	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Hyer Woods Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period July 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from two respondents (Appendix A). The Hyer Woods Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through Hyer Woods Conservation Area public comment period

Expresses concern/ambivalence about possible construction of a wooden bridge and/or observation deck.

The thought behind the idea of an observation deck is due to the increased use of the area. More folks are visiting the area, in part, due to the geocaches. Our hope is for others to have the same special memories of this area as you do. It is a very beautiful and peaceful place that we hope others will sit at the observation deck and enjoy. With the increased use comes the potential to damage parts of the rock spring. A bridge over this will allow visitors to see the old spring structure but not walk on or damage it. Our future desire is to explore the feasibility of extending the current trail past the observation deck up through the rest of the area and come out at the county road. This way visitors will get to see and enjoy a very unique area.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (1976). *Management plan for Hyer Woods Natural Area*.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (n.d.) Missouri Atlas database.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (n.d.). Natural Heritage review.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 1: Area Map

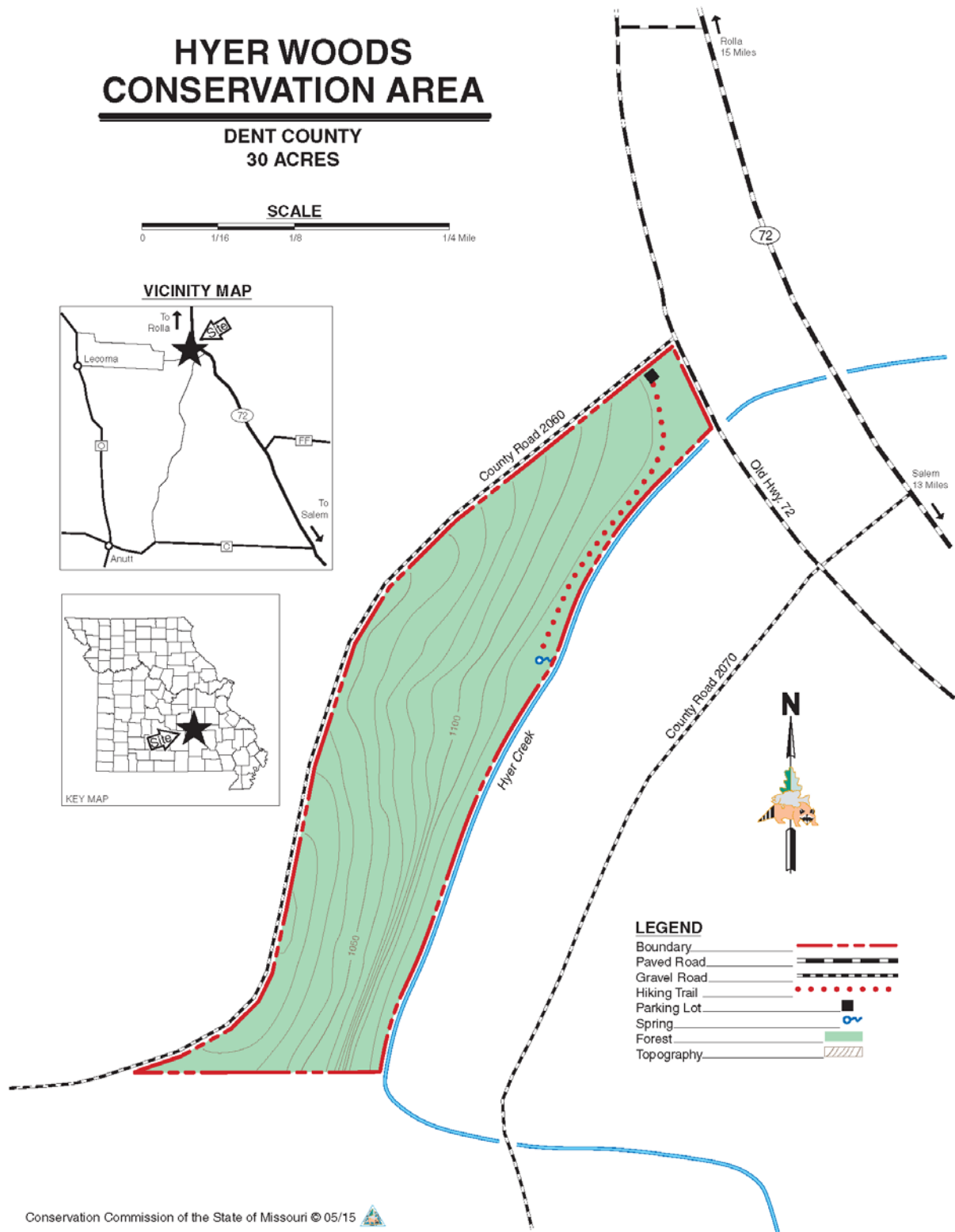
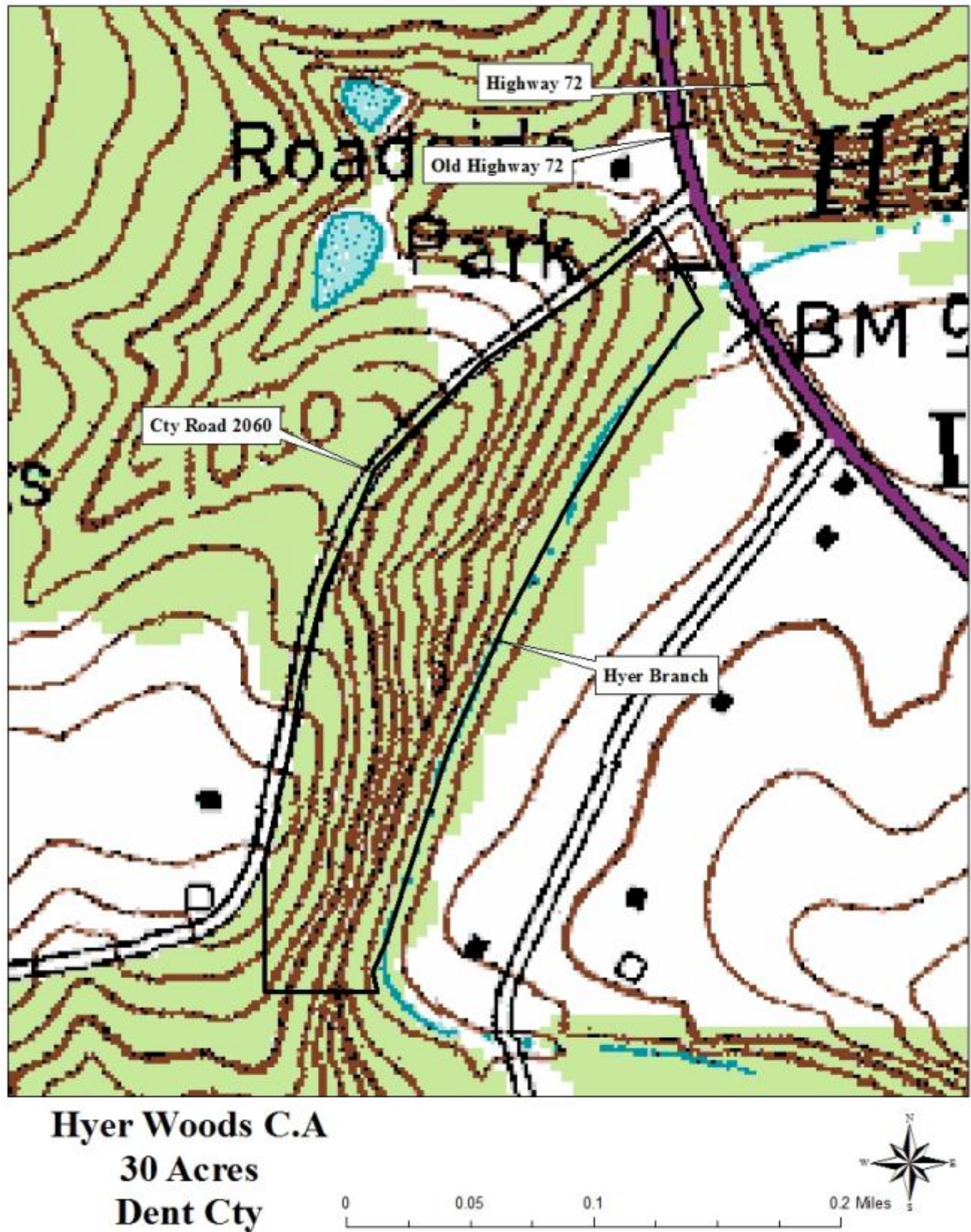


Figure 2: Aerial Map



Figure 3: Topographic Map



Appendix A. Hyer Woods Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (July 1-31, 2015):

I have reviewed this plan and look forward to the continued maintenance of the area.

"Hard copy comment submitted to Mike Fiaoni (7/9/2015):" Dear Mr. Fiaoni: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on plans for updating the Hyer Woods Conservation Area. I am Ruth Bowles Bercaw, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Hyer Bowles, donors of the area. My husband and I own the revamped old mill and a bit of land located almost directly across the creek from the Spring. Our family occupies the mill at odd times during summer months when our dispersed members gather there.

Each visit I generally walk across the decaying bridge and along the old spring road, and often do sketching while there. I walked that road quite recently, and generally speaking, I commend the improvements already made -- of a parking area, signage and maintenance. I do not recommend significant changes.

The Hyer Woods Area is small and I am content that there are no picnic tables, which would necessitate garbage receptacles nearby, or invite trash.

While it is true that a wooden bridge over parts of the rocked spring might delay/prevent collapse of the structure separating the spring from the old cooling area, I have ambivalent feelings about that. Though views of the branch in that area of the creek are special to me, I am not sure that an observation deck in that area would be used or warranted. Our two children, (adults now), Hyer Bercaw and Katherine Bercaw-Hartl will eventually inherit the mill property, and I have forwarded your requests for comments to them should they have opinions on the subject. Thank you for your attention.